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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 417

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM

SUBJ: AMB'S CALL ON DAHOMEAN FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY: FONMIN ALLADAYE RECEIVED ME 27 MARCH, OUR FIRST MEETING SINCE DEC 18. WE EXAMINED DAHOMEAN/AMERICAN RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY USG EFFORTS IN SUPPORT OF DAHOMEY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WITH REGARD TO CURRENT DIFFICULTIES -- LACK OF CONTACT, HARASSMENT OF OUR PERSONNEL AND FALSE MEDIA CHARGES -- HE SAID THERE WAS NO NEED FOR CONCERN SINCE THINGS WOULD SETTLE DOWN IN DAHOMEY IN NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION HEAR REAFFIRMATION OF OUR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS (WHICH HIS GOVT SHARED) AND TO CONTINUE ASSISTING DAHOMEY. END SUMMARY

1. FORNMIN ALLADAYE FINALLY RECEIVED ME YESTERDAY, 27 MARCH. THIS WAS OUR FIRST MEETING SINCE DEC 18. MY REQUEST FOR AN APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN MADE JAN 20 AND IT WAS RENEWED EVERY WEEK OR SO THEREAFTER.

2. I REVIEWED WITH HIM THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, EMPHASIZING USG SUPPORT OF AFRICAN ASPIRATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT, THE DIMENSIONS OF USG ASSISTANCE TO DAHOMEY AND
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OUR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN TRADITIONAL US-

DAHOMEAN FRIENDSHIP. THIS WAS REPLY OF MY FIRST CONVERSATION WITH HIM ALMOST FOUR MONTHS AGO BUT, IN VIEW OF THE FACT I HAD NOT SEEN HIM SINCE BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND OF THE DEEP GOVERNMENTAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS HERE THESE PAST FEW MONTHS, IT SEEMED TO ME THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO RESUME DIALOGUE. HE APPEARED TO WELCOME MY REMARKS.

3. REFERRING TO MY EXTENSIVE TRAVELS WITHIN DAHOMEY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, I SAID I THOUGHT I HAD A BETTER IDEA THAN BEFORE OF HIS COUNTRY'S NEEDS AND OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS HIS GOVERNMENT FACED. I WANTED HIM TO KNOW THAT OUR MISSION WAS FULLY MOBILIZED IN SUPPORT OF DAHOMEAN DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HOPED THREE DIFFICULTIES COULD BE OVERCOME SO THAT OUR EXERTIONS WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE:

A. INSUFFICIENT CONTACT AND DIALOGUE WITH DAHOMEAN GOVT. WITHOUT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONSULTATION, IT WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN DAHOMEAN PREFERENCES AND VIEWPOINTS RE DEVELOPMENT, AND TO ACCOMMODATE US ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS TO DAHOMEAN GOVT PLANS. ALLADAYE AGREED, BUT EXPLAINED THAT THE DAMPER ON CONTACTS SPRANG FROM SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES OF THE THREE COMMUNIST EMBASSIES. THE GOVT HAD TO BE EVEN HANDED AND APPLY THE SAME RULES TO ALL FOREIGN MISSIONS. HE ASSURED ME ALL MINISTRIES WISHED PRACTICE OPEN DOOR POLICY AND HE WOULD PERSONALLY DO ALL HE COULD TO FACILITATE IMPROVED CONTACT.

B. HARASSMENT OF PERSONNEL: ARRESTS, CONVOCATIONS, ETC. I BELIEVED COOPERATION WOULD PROCEED MORE EFFICIENTLY IF OUR PERSONNEL COULD DO THEIR WORK IN TRANQUILITY, AND IF I DID NOT HAVE TO SEND IN REPORTS OF INCIDENTS. IN FACT IT WAS MY HOPE THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE ANY MORE INCIDENTS AT ALL TO REPORT. ALLADAYE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD FULLY, NOTED THAT A FEW OVERZEALOUS OFFICIALS HAD GOT OUT OF HAND DURING PAST FEW MONTHS, AND SMOTHERED ME WITH ASSURANCES THAT WE NEED NO LONGER BE CONCERNED ABOUT SUCH MATTERS.

C. GROUNDLESS MEDIA ATTACKS ON THE US. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS INACCURATE, UNJUST AND DIALECTICALLY UNNECESSARY FOR THE OFFICIAL MEDIA TO BRAND US AS FASCIST OR IMPERIALIST, OR TO

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CONNECT SUCH A FRINDLY, CORRECT AND GENEROUS FRIEND AS USG WITH ANY POLITICAL HAPPENINGS IN DAHOMEY. COMMENTING SCORNFULLY ON THE WAY THE MEDIA WERE MANAGED, HE ASSERTED SOMETING WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE.

4. I SAID I HAD NOTED DURING COURSE OF MY CALLS ON MINISTERS AND OTHER AUTHORITIES THAT FEW WERE AWARE USG WAS DOING MUCH IN WAY OF ASSISTANCE. SOME HAD EVEN CHIDED ME FOR THE ALLEGED

LOW LEVEL OF US AID. IN MOST CASES, MY ORAL SUMMARIES OF OUR AID APPEARED TO ASTOUND MY INTERLOCUTORS. IN THIS CONNECTION, I SUMMED UP FOR HIM IN A GENERAL WAY THE PROPORTIONS OF OUR ASSISTANCE (WHICH APPEARED ALSO TO SURPRISE HIM). HE COMMENTED THAT KNOWLEDGE OF OUR GENEROSITY OUGHT TO BE MORE WIDESPREAD. HOWEVER HE BELIEVED THERE WAS SOME UNDERSTANDING HERE THAT CERTAIN OF DAHOMEY'S FRIENDS PROVIDED AID WHILE OTHERS (MEANING COMMUNIST COUNTRIES) ONLY TALKED AND PRETENDED THEY WERE HELPING.

5. AT ONE POINT ALLADAYE SAID MARXIST-LENINISM WAS PROVING VERY DIVISIVE IN THE COUNTRY AND THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE EMPHASIS ON PRACTICAL MATTERS AND LESS ON IDEOLOGY.

6. SUMMING UP HIS SIDE OF CONVERSATION ALLADAYE SAID HE WAS GRATIFIED HEAR REAFFIRMATION OF AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP FOR DAHOMEY AND HE SHARED OUR HOPE THAT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE CORDIAL AND SMOOTH. HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THE UNREST AND TENSION IN DAHOMEY WOULD SETTLE DOWN WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS AND HE FORESAW AN END TO DIFFICULTIES AND EMBARRASMENTS. WE SHOULD NOT BE CONCERNED. SINCE HE WAS NOT SHAKING FREE OF SOME OF HIS EXTRAMINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, HE ALSO HOPED TO SEE MORE OF ME IN THE FUTURE.

7. COMMENT: MY PRESENTATION WAS LOW KEY, NON PUSHY. MEETING WAS CORDIAL WITH PLENTY OF GOOD HUMOR. HE APPEARED GREATLY RELIEVED WHEN I GOT UP TO DEPART (PROBABLY BECAUSE HE EXPECTED ME TO REVIEW DETAILS OF RECENT HARASSMENTS), AND AS WE BID FAREWELL HE HALF EMBRACED ME.

8. HIS EXPLANATION OF RATIONALE FOR POLICY AGAINST CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN EMBASSIES MAKES NO SENSE BECAUSE POLICY IS NOT APPLIED AGAINST COMMUNIST EMBASSIES, WHICH ARE HAVING A FIELD CONFIDENTIAL

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DAY. ALLADAYE CONVENIENTLY FORGOT THAT PRES KEREKOU, IN HIS ADMONITIONS TO CONVOKED DAHOMEANS TO STAY AWAY FROM EMBASSIES, HAD SINGLED OUT ONLY THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN EMBASSIES. END COMMENT. ENGLE

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